

one of the largest and most valuable collections of plants in the world has been built up. The Smithsonian Institution has recently assumed charge of this collection, for which it has always been responsible, and thus relieved of this part of the work, the division of botany, of the Department of Agriculture, can continue its important economic investigations on weeds, pure seed, the geographic distribution of plants and their relation to environment, etc., all of which are distinct from those being pursued by other branches of the department.

Omitting further argument, the chief reasons for maintaining the present autonomy of the divisions may be summarized as follows:

(1) The work of each division is distinct and well defined, having been the result of gradual growth and in accordance with the natural development of the department as a whole.

(2) There is no duplication of work, not even in office or routine matters. The division of vegetable physiology and pathology may receive and answer 5,000 letters a year, all of which relate wholly to its work and involve a certain amount of labor, which could in no wise be saved by a concentration of effort. The same is true of its bibliographical work and such necessary labor that must be given to the collection of fungi, representing the economic phase of the division's investigations.

(3) The chief incentive which keeps good men in the department is that they have freedom in their investigation. The men in charge know the details of their own lines of work perhaps better than any one that could be put over them. They are in direct touch with the people for whose benefit the investigations are made, and it is only since this has been brought about that the work of the department in the main has come to be looked upon as a credit to the country. The moment the autonomy of the divisions is destroyed, which would certainly be the case if the plan proposed were carried out, the principal incentive for good work will be at an end.

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#### LOCAL FLORAS.

*To the Editors of the Botanical Gazette:*—I am interested in what you say editorially in regard to the scope of local floras. I agree very heartily with the proposition that a local flora should be more than a mere list and should not be confined by artificial bounds. Everyone who has worked faithfully on a local flora has felt this trouble. Much more could be printed in our floras were it not for expense of publication. I see no excuse whatever for the publication of lists that say nothing about the plants themselves and the problems of their distribution, and yet devote hundreds of dollars to



printing long lists of synonyms, dates, and references to prior publication.

Some time we shall all do better in this kind of work, but there is an immense amount of work to be done before the ground can be cleared for more valuable investigation. When much of the work now going on is put together as a whole, I think it will appear more valuable than it does at present.

EDWARD L. RAND, *Boston, Mass.*

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### THE AUTHORSHIP OF CERTAIN NAMES.

*To the Editors of the Botanical Gazette*:—Contribution U. S. Nat. Herb. 3: no. 9, just to hand, suggests a query as to the authorship of two new names proposed therein. On page 572 we have "*Salix barrattiana tweedyi* Bebb, var. nov.;" but it is explained by Mr. Rose in a footnote that the late Mr. Bebb gave the variety another name, which was preoccupied, and that he (Mr. Rose) substituted *tweedyi*. It appears to me that we cannot possibly cite as Bebb's a name he never wrote, or even thought of, and the status of the matter is the same as if Bebb had published his description with the preoccupied name, and Rose had offered a substitute in a later publication. Consequently it must be *S. barrattiana tweedyi* Rose.

A more difficult question arises in regard to "*Crepis barbiger*a Leiberg, sp. nov.," page 565. From the appearance of the description, and the absence of quotation marks or any statement to the contrary, we are led to suppose that it was written wholly by Mr. Coville. Now if Mr. Leiberg merely ticketed specimens of a new *Crepis* with the name *barbiger*a, this name would be nothing but a *nomen nudum*, and the author of the species would be he who first gave or cited a description in connection with the name. Nevertheless, we may, I think, still regard *Crepis barbiger*a as Leiberg's species, even allowing the description to be Coville's, by assuming that the latter prepared a diagnosis, to which the former gave a name. The status of the matter then is the same as if Coville had published a nameless description, and Leiberg had in a later paper proposed a name.

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